

What is claimed is:

1. A method for determining carrier specific commitment data for the shipment of a package from an origin to a destination by a carrier,
5 comprising the steps of:
 - (a) determining the destination area for the package based upon its intended destination,
 - (b) determining the service level supported by the carrier for the destination area,
 - 10 (c) determining a desired class of service for a package with respect to its delivery by the carrier,
 - (d) based upon the determined class of service for the package, determining a service column index value,
 - (e) based upon the service level supported by the carrier for the destination area and the class of service desired, locating a cell in a delivery commitment matrix, wherein each cell contains the delivery commitment information for that carrier for the specified service level and class of service desired, and
 - 15 (f) reading said delivery commitment information for the specified cell.
2. A method for determining carrier specific commitment data as defined in claim 1, wherein the service column index values and class of services are maintained in a token map.
- 25 3. The method of claim 1 wherein said delivery commitment information is verified relative to a real time clock; and, if said verified delivery commitment information is at a time later than a pre-determined cut-off time, then posting a notification of said later time and determining
30 whether or not said selected carrier and/or said selected service is to be

maintained or whether an alternative carrier and/or alternative service is to be selected.

4. A method for determining carrier specific commitment data as defined in claim 2, wherein service levels supported by a carrier are maintained in a destination map, wherein for each destination area supported by the carrier information is stored in a location of the destination map related to the service level supported by the carrier for that destination area.

5. A method for determining carrier specific commitment data as defined in claim 4, wherein the destination map has a location for each postal ZIP code and wherein a code is stored in each such location.

6. A method for determining carrier specific commitment data as defined in claim 5, wherein a null code is stored in each destination map postal ZIP code location which is not supported by the carrier.

7. A method for determining carrier specific commitment data for the shipment of a package from an origin to a destination by a carrier, further comprising the steps of:

- (a) receiving a zone based upon the origin and destination of the package,
- (b) based upon the received zone and the class of service desired, determining if a service column index value is assigned for the desired class of service and if not, obtaining a zone token associated with that class of service,
- (c) based upon the zone token and the received zone, locating a cell in a zone map matrix, wherein each cell contains the delivery commitment information for that carrier for the specified service level and class of service desired, and

(d) reading said delivery commitment information for the specified cell.

- 5 8. A method for determining carrier specific commitment data as defined in claim 7, further comprising the step of:

10 determining the desired carrier from a plurality of carriers and based upon the determined carrier assigning a code related to the service level supported by that carrier for a specific destination area into a carrier specific destination map for all destinations supported by that carrier and wherein the token map and delivery commitment map contain specific information for the delivery commitment for that carrier so as to determine delivery commitment information which is specific for the specified carrier.

- 15 9. The method of claim 7 wherein said delivery commitment information is verified relative to a real time clock; and, if said verified delivery commitment information is at a time later than a pre-determined cut-off time, then posting a notification of said later time and determining whether or not said selected carrier and/or said selected service is to be maintained or whether an alternative carrier and/or alternative service is to be selected.

- 20 10. A method for determining carrier specific commitment data as defined in claim 8, further wherein the carrier supports origin dependent delivery commitment information and wherein a separate destination map is provided for each origin dependent delivery commitment for that carrier, wherein each delivery map has assigned a code related to the service level supported by that carrier for each destination area supported by that carrier, and further comprising the step of determining the origin area of the package based upon its origin and determining the code associated
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with that origin area representing the origin dependent delivery commitment for that carrier for that origin and using this information to access a corresponding destination map associated with the value in the origin area for determining the service level supported by the carrier for the destination area based upon the origin area.

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11. A system for determining carrier specific commitment data for the shipment of a package from an origin to a destination by a carrier, comprising:

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- (a) means for determining the destination area for the package based upon its intended destination,
- (b) means for determining the service level supported by the carrier for the destination area,
- (c) means for determining a desired class of service for a package with respect to its delivery by the carrier,
- (d) means, based upon the determined class of service for the package, for determining a service column index value,
- (e) means, based upon the service level supported by the carrier, for the destination area and the class of service desired, locating a cell in a delivery commitment matrix, wherein each cell contains the delivery commitment information for that carrier for the specified service level and class of service desired, and
- (f) means for reading said delivery commitment information for the specified cell.

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12. A system for determining carrier specific commitment data as defined in claim 11, wherein the service column index values and class of services are maintained in a token map.

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13. The system of claim 11 wherein a real time clock is utilized to verify said

delivery commitment information; and, if said verified delivery commitment information is at a time later than a pre-determined cut-off time, then posting a notification of said later time and determining whether or not said selected carrier and/or said selected service is to be maintained or whether an alternative carrier and/or alternative service is to be selected.

14. A system for determining carrier specific commitment data as defined in claim 12, wherein service levels supported by a carrier are maintained in a destination map, wherein for each destination area supported by the carrier information is stored in a location of the destination map related to the service level supported by the carrier for that destination area.

15. A system for determining carrier specific commitment data as defined in claim 14, wherein the destination map has a location for each postal ZIP code and wherein a code is stored in each such location.

16. A method for determining carrier specific commitment data as defined in claim 15, wherein a null code is stored in each destination map postal ZIP code location which is not supported by the carrier.

17. A system for determining carrier specific commitment data for the shipment of a package from an origin to a destination by a carrier, further comprising:

(a) means for receiving a zone based upon the origin and destination of the package,

(b) means, based upon the received zone and the class of service desired, for determining if a service column index value is assigned for the class of service and if not, obtaining a zone token associated with that class of service,

(c) means, based upon the zone token and the received zone, for locating a cell in a zone map matrix, wherein each cell contains the delivery commitment information for that carrier for the specified service level and class of service desired, and

(d) means for reading said delivery commitment information for the specified cell.

18. A method for determining carrier specific commitment data as defined in claim 17, further comprising:

(a) means for determining the desired carrier from a plurality of carriers and based upon the determined carrier assigning a code related to the service level supported by that carrier for a specific destination area into a carrier specific destination map for all destinations supported by that carrier and wherein the token map and delivery commitment map contain specific information for the delivery commitment for that carrier so as to determine delivery commitment information which is specific for the specified carrier.

19. The system of claim 17 wherein a real time clock is utilized to verify said delivery commitment information; and, if said verified delivery commitment information is at a time later than a pre-determined cut-off time, then posting a notification of said later time and determining whether or not said selected carrier and/or said selected service is to be maintained or whether an alternative carrier and/or alternative service is to be selected.

20. A system for determining carrier specific commitment data as defined in claim 18, further wherein the carrier supports origin dependent delivery commitment information and wherein a separate destination map is provided for each origin dependent delivery commitment for that carrier,

